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REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS TENTH SPECIAL SESSION

Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters

Report of the Secretary-General

1. In order to discharge its functions, the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters holds an annual session at United Nations Headquarters. Pursuant to section III of General Assembly resolution 37/99 K of 13 December 1982, the functions of the Advisory Board are as follows:

(a) To advise the Secretary-General on various aspects of studies and research in the area of arms limitation and disarmament carried out under the auspices of the United Nations or institutions within the United Nations system, in particular on the integration of a programme of such studies with a comprehensive programme of disarmament, once this had been established;

(b) To serve as the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research;

(c) To advise the Secretary-General on the implementation of the World Disarmament Campaign;

(d) At the specific invitation of the Secretary-General, to provide him with advice on other matters within the area of disarmament and arms limitation.

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2. In 1989, the Secretary-General decided to make a number of changes in the functioning of the Board, so as to facilitate a broader interpretation of the Board's existing mandate and to permit the Secretary-General to draw on the accumulated experience and wisdom of the Board for advice on matters within the area of arms limitation and disarmament. The title of the Board was also modified to Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters.

3. The Secretary-General reports annually to the General Assembly on the work of the Advisory Board, as requested by the Assembly in its resolution 38/183 O of 20 December 1983. A report on the 1992 session of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters follows.

4. The Board held its twenty-third session from 22 to 26 June in New York, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Bjorn Inge Kristvik of Norway. The chairmanship of the Board rotates annually. The present membership of the Board is shown in the annex.

5. The Board devoted three meetings of the present session to discussing current developments and trends in international affairs and the implications therein for the role of the United Nations in international security and disarmament. In connection with the discussions on this item, the members of the Board received copies of the declaration of the summit meeting of the Security Council of 31 January 1992 (S/23500) and the report of the Secretary-General entitled "An Agenda for Peace - preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping" (A/47/277-S/24111). The members of the Board were joined in their discussions under this item by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Vladimir Petrovsky. In response to the Secretary-General's request to the Board in 1989, the outcome of the Board's discussions on these questions was subsequently reflected in a personal report to him by the Chairman.

6. As regards the Board's discussions on current trends in international affairs and the role of the United Nations in international security and disarmament, as reflected in the Chairman's report, the Secretary-General notes the view expressed that, despite the fact that the end of the cold war had eased the process of disarmament in certain areas, there were still a number of arms control and disarmament issues that needed to be addressed with resolve. Furthermore, in the light of the dramatic changes that had taken place in the international security environment, there was a need for a fresh look into the field of arms control and disarmament with a view to determining new priorities and fully integrating it as part of the process of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping.

7. The following issues were identified by the Board as requiring prompt attention: non-proliferation in all its aspects, continued qualitative and quantitative nuclear disarmament, conventional disarmament, safe disposal of weapons, transparency, verification and conversion. In this connection, the Secretary-General wishes to share with Member States some of the recommendations arising from the Board's discussions, which Member States might find worthy of attention:

(a) It is important not to allow the disarmament debate to become a North-South question;

(b) Efforts to curb the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems should not hamper the transfer of technology for peaceful purposes;

(c) There is a need to move from the limited nature of existing technology control regimes to a more universal approach and, to this end, the United Nations could provide the appropriate forum for such discussions;

(d) Openness and transparency is an important focus for the United Nations, not least through the Register of Conventional Arms, which could be an important early warning instrument in preventive diplomacy. Furthermore, the United Nations could play a constructive role in encouraging such regional confidence-building measures as data exchanges on arsenals and stockpiles, and deployments;

(e) Conversion should be given increased attention on the United Nations disarmament agenda;

(f) There is a need to reassess the relevance and effectiveness of the multilateral disarmament machinery in the light of the new developments in the international security environment. In particular, it might be useful for the international community to review the current agendas and present membership/formats of the Conference on Disarmament, the First Committee and, in particular, the Disarmament Commission.

8. The Secretary-General notes the interest expressed by the Board in maintaining closer links through informal exchanges with the Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs responsible for disarmament matters.

9. The Board was briefed by the Director of the Office for Disarmament Affairs on the status of recently completed and ongoing studies on disarmament issues, as well as on the implementation of the programme of activities of the World Disarmament Campaign.

10. The Board was informed of the follow-up work to the study on transparency in international arms transfers of conventional arms requested by the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session. In this connection, the Board learned of the activities of the Panel of Governmental Technical Experts on the Register of Conventional Arms established by the Secretary-General, whose responsibilities include the elaboration of technical procedures for the effective operation of the Register and modalities for early expansion of its scope. The importance of transparency was stressed as a confidence-building measure, which, seriously pursued, could help to reduce reliance on armaments as a means of conducting international affairs.

11. In addition, the Board was informed that the group of experts carrying out the study on defensive security concepts and policies, chaired by Ambassador Boris Krasulin of the Russian Federation, was due to complete its report at its forthcoming session in July for subsequent submission by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. A status report on the study on specific aspects related to the application of different confidence-building measures in outer space, chaired by Ambassador Roberto Garcia Moritan of Argentina, is due for submission to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session.

12. Some members expressed the view that there is a need for careful consideration of potential themes for new studies so that they may truly reflect and take into account the continuing changing climate in international relations. One suggestion was made regarding a possible study of non-proliferation in all its aspects; another one referred to the need for further study of the question of dual-purpose technologies.

13. The Board was also informed that, in view of the dramatic changes in the international security environment, a new approach has been taken in the implementation of the programme of activities of the World Disarmament Campaign. Despite a reduced availability of resources, a concerted effort was being made to carry out an information programme that promotes the role of arms control and disarmament in preventive diplomacy, particularly through emphasis on the need for transparency and other confidence-building measures, disarmament measures at the regional level and non-proliferation in all its aspects.

14. Several members expressed the view that indeed it was correct to shift the emphasis on issues promoted within the framework of the Campaign and also that perhaps the time had come to give a new name to the information activities carried out by the Office for Disarmament Affairs. It was felt that the name World Disarmament Campaign no longer reflected the realities of the present times.

15. The Board was also briefed on the activities of the three regional centres, in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean and on the difficult financial situation facing them, as they too relied on voluntary contributions to implement their mandates. Some members raised the question as to whether the particular location of the centres was the most accessible and convenient in view of the role they were expected to play in promoting confidence-building and other related disarmament measures within their regions.

16. In its capacity as the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the Advisory Board considered and approved the report of the Director of the Institute on its activities in 1991/1992 and the research programme and proposed annual budget for 1993. In addition, the Board was also informed by the Director of the Institute on the elements of the programme for 1994. An account of the Board's deliberations is contained in document A/47/345, annex II, including the Board's recommendation of a

subvention from the regular budget of the United Nations amounting to $220,000 for 1993. The Board expressed the view that the annual subvention from the regular budget of the United Nations would continue to be needed in the future in order to assure the independence of the Institute.

ANNEX

Members of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters

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Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, is an ex officio member of the Advisory Board when acting in its capacity as the Board of Trustees of the Institute

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